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My name is Dr. Regina Milano, I am a Biology teacher at West Haven High School. **I am here to support Dissection Choice for Connecticut students (HB12-5184).** My dissertation entitled, *Biology Teachers' Dissection Practices and the Influences That Lead to Their Adoption: An Exploratory Research*, was inspired by a lack of resolution of the dissection debate in CT and a question about what constitutes an equitable learning experience for all.

While 81% of sampled teachers already provide student objectors with alternatives, students need your support to provide protection against other vehement teacher I studied who's own autonomy risked jeopardizing students ethical/moral rights.

When instructional methods and student's preference do not coincide, students may incur significant and cognitive, emotional, and social cost (Bowd & Shapiro, 1993) including a great deal of anxiety and fear about failing the course or disappointing the teacher. Therefore, many students decide not to discuss their concerns (Adkins & Lock, 1994; Balcombe, 1997; Cunningham, 2000). This constitutes a marginalized student population. Pedagogical decisions about dissection and alternatives that do not consider cognitive, emotional, and social costs to students, constitutes indirect coercion by the teachers and a consequent failure to provide a safe learning environment. The result is that some students suppress internal conflict and take part in the exercise. Coercion may lead to a reduction in critical thinking and desensitization to the life of the creature (Cunningham, 2000; Heim, 1981), which may transfer to other dimensions of the student's life (Orlans, 1988). Such coercion denies the student the right to make choices about learning that reflect her own personal interests and imparts upon the student an understanding that differences are not valued.

Ethics are an important consideration since they are central to the interactions of teachers and students as supported repeatedly in educational research. (Brock, 1998; Nichols, 1995; Grace & Ratcliffe, 2002; Greaves et al., 1993; McInerney, 1993; Sullins, et al., 1995; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Markóczy, 2000; Birch, 2000; Russell, 1996.). "Ethics [were] a major consideration among pupils" (Grace & Ratcliff, p. 1165, McInerney, 1993) where killing animals for education or any purpose were the most important reasons for opting out of dissection (Downie and Meadow, 1995). A "value for life" was a reason for preventing extinction (Greaves et al., 1993). Seventy two percent of 14-15 years old students felt that breeding animals for dissection was wrong and 83% wanted alternatives; 38% objected to the use of any animal material being used for dissection (Millett & Lock, 1992).

Notwithstanding the ethical considerations, the education goal of the federal government is to produce high performing students who are at least proficient in English language art, mathematics, and science through the promotion of better instruction and curricula. Thus, Connecticut teachers must focus increasingly on inquiry-based, authentic learning experiences, aligning instruction with standards. Dissection, which follows a standard inspect, dissect, identify and memorize protocol (Wilson & Marcus, 1992) does not meet the requirements of "inquiry based" problem solving methods identified in Connecticut State standards and must therefore make room for more current and effective instructional practice.

Forty percent of qualitative phase participants acknowledged evolving attitudes about the necessity of dissection, which led to a greater reliance on their students' perspectives about dissection than in earlier teaching years. These changes were attributed to their own maturity as teachers, a deepening interest in student concerns/objections and research on the effects of dissection on students and animals. In my study, an increase in the number of students objecting to dissection was considered a disadvantage of dissection and while teachers still preferred dissection as a teaching practice, a growing number are attending to student preferences. In fact, 80.7% of participants (n=100) answered "agree" or "strongly disagree" to the statement,

"Student learning style plays a role in my dissection practice", and 81.4% of quantitative phase participants (n=101) responding agree or strongly agree to the statement, "Students who object to dissection are provided with an alternative" However, 57.4% of the same population (n=70) agreed that they had tried to convince reluctant students to dissection. It can be inferred that participants' preference for dissection may have precluded them from initiating discussions about the practice. Any measure of student objection reveals the need to protect student autonomy where classroom instruction threatens their ethical/moral belief system.

At least ten states have adopted dissection choice laws or resolutions. Connecticut must advance pedagogy by moving away from cruel antiquated instructional practices that fail us in reaching our goals. Dissection choice policy is necessary and imminent in Connecticut school districts. I also suggest that the State mandate teacher-initiated, qualitative and quantitative assessments of student dissection perspectives, including video of the animals' origin prior to any dissection, to expose disparities between student dissection perspectives and their own.

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